herself was not allowed out after sunset, but if she should have to go, "she takes a burning coal with tongs out with her, after leaving a broom near the baby to use in defending himself against the devil."

The baby's clothes were taken from the line before sunset. They were first held over the fire before they were put on the baby. During the whole first year the clothes were not turned inside out, nor were they pounded when washed by the customary *buhalka* (paddle). If this should be done, the baby might be afraid of thunder. Furthermore, the water in which the baby had been bathed could not be thrown out after sunset.

If a child became sick, "the first thing was to warm him, for he might have caught cold." Then he was given some home remedies prescribed by the *babi.* If the child did not then recover, the parents tried everything they knew, hoping that after some time "everything bad would pass away." In case the child grew worse, they called some of the neighbors or some old woman to come to see him. Only in very serious cases, when the peasants became convinced that nothing could help the child, would they carry him to the doctor. The reason for taking the child to the doctor was to save the extra fee charged for a home visit. Finally, "if God has given the child some more days to live, then the child will recover; if not, then his days are finished and God wants to take the child." (It is no wonder, then, that in Bulgaria 123 out of every 1,000 infants born in 1941 died during their first year of life. Although this represented a decline from the 1938 figure of 144, it still is more than two and one-half times the rate in the United States, which was 46 in 1941.)

The care given to a sick adult differed somewhat from that given to a sick child. When a person had been ill for a long time, his relatives went to the priest for holy water called *babina voda* (old woman's water) by the less respectful peasants. Sometimes the family let the sick person drink some of this water, but this practice was falling into disuse, "for the young people do not believe in it." I was told that very few believed in the curative power of the icons; but if a sick person should happen to, he was carried to the church to kiss the icon.

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Prayers were also believed efficacious. As soon as a person became sick, his people prayed to God to help him and cure him. In addition, the priest prayed for the sick individual in the church (or in the home if the sick person could not go to the church) asking God to cure his servant from such and such a sickness and to give him peace. Candles were burned when the prayers were being said, but the burning of these candles was not supposed to have any curative power. "This service is performed more for the old people and although it is said to be *vetur rabota* [plumb foolishness], yet many times it helps the sick to recover. Nowadays people do not believe in God and this is why many people die, and also that is why life in general is as it is, so heavy."

In looking for the causes of illness the peasants also turned to the Almighty who, it was formerly believed, sent sickness as a punishment upon individuals for wrongs they had done. While many people in 1937 had the same attitude, there were some who accepted the germ explanation. But even some of these, if a sickness dragged on and on, suspected that God might be meting out some punishment, germs or no germs. Here was the way they so often put it: "And God has the right to punish the people, for now they have begun not to believe in him and not to listen to him. Now the people are forgetting God and are with the Devil."

The villagers knew the names of only a few diseases and classified all illnesses under one of these few. The worst disease was the "plague" (typhoid fever), then tuberculosis, *sharka* (pox), scarlatina, and finally, "a bad cold." The doctor used a more scientific classification in listing the causes of death. Her report for 1936 showed that thirty-three people died within the year. Diseases accounting for four deaths each were tuberculosis, nervous disorders, and pneumonia; those accounting for two deaths each were scarlatina, whooping cough, diphtheria, cancer, heart disease, old age, and childbirth (mother); those causing one death each were childbirth (infant), typhus, erysipelas, bronchitis, diarrhea, digestive ailment, and accident. Her scientific approach did not necessarily mean that the doctor's recovery percentage was very high, because patients were brought too late for proper treatment. Therefore the peasants said: "And

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assets. They could do hard work; they could run countless errands. Later, they were the heirs to the father's fields and the chief support of the parents in their declining years. 858

One of the first women I interviewed about family life told me: "I had a little boy but he died when forty days old. Now I cannot help crying every St. George's Day [May 6] and every St. Dimiter's Day [November 8] when my husband goes out to hire a boy to care for our sheep. If my son had lived, he could have taken care of the sheep for us."

Later on, in the course of a conversation with a garrulous *baba* I asked her if she did not think her seven children too many for one woman to have. She snorted, pointed out of the window to her sons unloading wood they had gathered in the forest, and said: "If I hadn't had lots of children, who would go to get our wood?"

Sons were greater economic assets than girls but even so would have normally received more attention in this man-centered society. As parents often had to go to some expense to get their daughters married off, they were always jubilant at the arrival of a son. The good-natured priest was occasionally the butt of a number of sly jests because he had three daughters and no son. One man in particular, Stefan, who had been in the same predicament, had recently acquired a son, who was now the apple of his eye. He was fond of his daughters, but made no secret of his particular pride in his boy. I thoroughly enjoyed a conversation between Stefan and the priest in which Stefan fully explained how to be sure the next one was a boy. I have known of fathers who refused to look at the newly arrived infant upon learning that it was a girl. Of course, they eventually acquiesced and simply hoped for better luck next time. Where parents had no sons, village curiosity reached a peak when a new child was expected, and an occasional wager was laid on the possibility of its being a boy. But favoritism was the exception rather than the rule. When you asked a Dragalevtsy parent which child he liked best he responded: "I like them all equally; they are just like the fingers on one's hand." He often added the proverb, "The fingers on one's hand feel pain equally, do they not?" 858 562 593

Whenever a child suffered from a physical or mental handicap Dragalevtsy parents, like most parents around the world, were more 732 593 758

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732 593 758 solicitous than they would have been if the child were normal. A peasant named Vladimir once invited me to his home for what I thought was to be a chat about life in general. We walked through the sturdy gate, slushed through the mud in the yard, and lowered our heads as we entered the house's one large room. The children scurried out of our way while Yurdanka, his wife, offered us each a low three-legged stool. Not far from the stove in the center of the room I saw in the dim light what appeared to be a teen-aged girl, drooling and entirely oblivious to our presence. Vladimir, Yurdanka, and I talked about many things while their younger children sat on the bed and listened intently. Then the father brought up the matter of their feeble-minded daughter:

"*Tova e nashe neshtastie*" (This is our misfortune), he said. And then he told me her story. Some illness, probably meningitis, had arrested her mental development at an early age. Doctors had given them no hope and they wondered if I, a foreigner, knew of something they could do. Their faces showed the suffering that had touched their lives: the comments of misunderstanding, superstitious neighbors, and the constant attention they had to pay to the child's physical needs. Truly she was their misfortune. I knew that the treatment of the mentally deficient and mentally ill in Bulgaria was still in that tragic stage where the unfortunates were confined and given almost no scientific treatment. The parents wanted more than that. It was with a heavy heart that I left them, for their misfortune was not only that of economic loss, but of seeing a wasted life sharing the one living room of the tiny house.

593 The child, whether grown or small, approached the father through the mother. Though not universally the case, most Dragalevtsy children told their mother what they wanted and then asked her to relay this request to the father. The mother did so quite willingly, for she felt much closer to the children than the father. In this way the distance between father and children was traditionally maintained, increasing filial respect.

There were accepted ways for children to show their respect to the parents. The traditional patterns all centered around the father: standing up when he entered the room; waiting for him to eat first;